Ontario

ONTARIO'S NEW APPROACH TO ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Prosperous and Healthy Aboriginal Communities Create a Better Future for Aboriginal Children and Youth

Spring 2005

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A NEW APPROACH TO ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ontario is charting a new course for a constructive, co-operative relationship with the Aboriginal peoples of Ontario – a relationship that is sustained by mutual respect and that leads to improved opportunities and a better future for Aboriginal children and youth.

Our new approach calls for working with Aboriginal peoples to build this relationship and through it, develop productive partnerships, collaborate on key initiatives and achieve real progress on shared goals.

In 2004, we asked First Nations and Aboriginal leaders and organizations across Ontario for feedback about their interactions with the province, and about their hopes and priorities for their communities. Common themes emerged from their response. Expanding services for children and youth is a key concern. Improving the co-ordination of provincial and federal programs is another.

Above all, Aboriginal leaders said they want improved relationships with Ontario and more control over a range of matters that affect their communities, now and for the future. They stressed the paramount importance of finding Aboriginal solutions to Aboriginal concerns.

Relationship building will take time and require mutual effort and goodwill. It will also require workable channels of communication through effective relationship processes – both Ontario-based and at the Federal/Provincial/Territorial/Aboriginal level. As part of our new approach, Ontario is taking steps to make sure that appropriate processes are in place. We are looking for ways to make established processes work better, and will introduce new processes where needed.

We are also setting out a range of initiatives that respond to Aboriginal concerns.

Achieving a better future for ourselves and our young people is a goal shared by all residents of Ontario. At the heart of this government's new approach is the recognition that together we must create a better future for Aboriginal children and youth. We are committed to working with Aboriginal leaders and communities on health and education initiatives that will help Aboriginal children and youth stay healthier, do better at school and enjoy improved opportunities throughout life.

Other initiatives focus on improving the quality of life for Aboriginal communities and the children and youth who live there. A new Northern Table will look at the unique requirements of northern Aboriginal communities. An approach to consultation on matters related to constitutionally protected rights, Métis harvesting regimes, a justice strategy and a tobacco strategy are also important elements of Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs.

These initiatives offer a platform for working together on a spectrum of challenges – to ensure that Aboriginal peoples share in Ontario's prosperity, and help Aboriginal children and youth get a better start in life.

A NEW APPROACH TO ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

At the same time, the Ontario government has to manage its fiscal challenge. The 2004-2005 deficit has been reduced by $2.5 billion, from $5.5 billion in 2003-2004, to $3 billion in 2004-2005.

Achieving our shared goals with the Aboriginal peoples of Ontario will take mutual determination and perseverance.

The McGuinty government is committed to creating a new and positive era in the province's relationship with Aboriginal peoples in all their diversity. We look forward to working with Aboriginal communities and organizations across the province to make this new relationship a reality. In this way we will be able to sustain new, constructive partnerships and achieve real progress while staying fiscally responsible.

The Ontario government is listening, and our new approach offers the following vision as a basis for moving forward together:

Prosperous and healthy Aboriginal communities create a better future for Aboriginal children and youth

A NEW APPROACH TO ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Principles

In developing a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples, we are building on the McGuinty government's True North commitments and are being guided by the following six principles:

1. Respectful Relationships with First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal Service Providers

- Ontario recognizes that First Nations have existing governments and is committed to dealing with First Nations' governments in a co-operative and respectful manner that is consistent with their status as governments. Many aspects of Ontario's evolving relationship with First Nations will take shape from important policy decisions to come. Until this work is completed, Ontario's recognition of a government-to-government relationship with First Nations does not include jurisdictional or fiscal changes, or reflect a position related to the nature of First Nations' governments or rights.

- Ontario is committed to working with Métis in a respectful manner. Ontario will discuss with Métis their aspirations regarding governance matters and will work with them as their institutions and structures evolve.

- Ontario recognizes the importance of programs delivered by Aboriginal service providers across Ontario. The province will continue to partner with them to support and improve, where possible, the delivery of these programs.

2. Different Circumstances – Different Needs

- Ontario's Aboriginal population is the largest and most diverse in Canada. There are different cultural communities, political groups and organizations – each with unique needs and perspectives.

- Ontario recognizes this diversity, and the need for flexibility in order to implement meaningful changes that reflect community priorities.

3. Aboriginal Participation

- Aboriginal peoples will have greater involvement in matters that directly affect their communities, including where applicable in programs and service delivery.

A NEW APPROACH TO ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

4. Federal Roles and Responsibilities

- Ontario will work to establish clearer roles and responsibilities in keeping with the federal government's special relationship with Aboriginal peoples. The province will work with the federal government to foster a more constructive and co-operative relationship on Aboriginal matters.

5. Aboriginal and Treaty Rights

- Ontario respects Aboriginal and treaty rights protected by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and is committed to meeting the province's constitutional and other legal obligations in respect of Aboriginal peoples.

6. Inclusiveness

- Where appropriate and beneficial, Ontario will seek input from non-Aboriginal stakeholders on matters that affect their interests.

Ontario intends these principles to provide a foundation for building positive relationships and productive partnerships with Aboriginal peoples. Ontario recognizes that establishing meaningful relationships is the basis for improving the quality of life for Aboriginal children and youth.

WORKING TOGETHER

Improving Ontario-Aboriginal Relationship Processes

Ontario is working to revitalize existing relationship processes and introduce new ones as a cornerstone of our new approach. Making sure that Ontario has a range of flexible processes in place will foster genuine understanding between the province and Aboriginal peoples and help clarify shared priorities.

Aboriginal leaders have also asked Ontario to play a greater role in established Federal/Provincial/Territorial/Aboriginal processes. We look forward to working with our Aboriginal and federal partners to achieve better co-ordination and develop complementary initiatives in areas of mutual concern.

Goal

- Develop and renew effective relationship processes that foster meaningful communication, leading to stronger relationships and more productive partnerships.

Strategies

- The Premier and the Minister Responsible for Native Affairs meet annually with the leaders of the Chiefs of Ontario, Métis Nation of Ontario, Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, and Ontario Native Women's Association to discuss Ontario's overall approach to Aboriginal relations, to listen to Aboriginal leaders' respective views and priorities and to communicate Ontario's priorities to Aboriginal leaders.

First Nations

- Through the renewed bilateral Ontario-First Nations Process (OFNP), Ontario government ministers and First Nations leaders meet twice a year to share their respective visions for the future and discuss short- and longer-term issues.

- Through the revitalization of intergovernmental relations, First Nations, Canada and Ontario have agreed to establish a forum, and operate for an initial period of two years through working groups to address matters of mutual interest and priority.

- The Minister Responsible for Native Affairs meets separately with First Nations leaders to learn about their concerns and to ensure their concerns are understood by the provincial government.

WORKING TOGETHER

Métis Nation Of Ontario

- Through a tripartite process, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), Canada and Ontario have established a regularized meeting process to address non-rights-based matters of priority to the MNO.

- Through a bilateral process, the MNO and Ontario meet to discuss harvesting rights protected by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association

- Through a tripartite process, the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA), Canada and Ontario have established a regularized meeting process to address non-rights-based matters of priority to the OMAA.

- Through a bilateral process, the OMAA and Ontario meet to discuss harvesting rights protected by Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Aboriginal Service Providers

- The Minister Responsible for Native Affairs meets regularly with the leaders of the Ontario Native Women's Association and the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres to learn about their concerns and to ensure their concerns are understood by this government.

WORKING TOGETHER

Strengthening Federal/Provincial/Territorial/Aboriginal Processes

The federal government has a major role in Aboriginal affairs based on its constitutional obligations as well as its public policy priorities. It funds a range of Aboriginal activities and initiatives in Ontario. First Nations health care and some other initiatives are already co-ordinated with Ontario.

Historically, Ontario has played and continues to play a key role in Federal/Provincial/Territorial/Aboriginal (FPTA) processes. The province has taken steps to reinforce this role and will continue to do so as part of our new approach to Aboriginal affairs in Ontario.

Ontario, along with Canada, the provinces, the territories and the national Aboriginal organizations, is working on two important FPTA processes in 2005-2006:

- The First Ministers Meeting (FMM) on Aboriginal Issues, planned for November 2005, is addressing relationships, education and housing.
- Development of an Aboriginal Health Blueprint is scheduled for September 2005, to be presented to the FMM in November 2005.

In addition, two Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) sectoral processes, Justice and Women, have identified Aboriginal issues as priorities.

Goals

- Promote Ontario's priorities in key FPTA processes.
- Improve federal/provincial collaboration focussed on joint priorities.
- Champion Aboriginal children and youth initiatives within the FPT/FPTA arena.

WORKING TOGETHER

Strategies

- Plan an effective, focussed participation in the FMM on Aboriginal Issues scheduled for November 2005 and provide opportunities for Ontario's Aboriginal partners to give input on the agenda items at the FMM.
- Work with other provinces and the national Aboriginal organizations to develop an Aboriginal Health Blueprint.
- Work to establish clearer federal and provincial roles and responsibilities, including funding responsibilities on- and off-reserve for capital and for operational programming.
- Improve co-ordination and collaboration with the federal government in order to support and advance Ontario's priority initiatives.
- Identify opportunities for enhanced federal participation to support Ontario's Aboriginal priorities.

What We've Done

- ✓ Strengthened Ontario's participation in the key FPTA processes – the Aboriginal Health Blueprint and the FMM on Aboriginal Issues.
- ✓ Co-hosted (with British Columbia) a Forum on Health Care Sustainability and Reform in May 2004, at which seven national Aboriginal organizations gave input about Aboriginal health care.
- ✓ Continued this exchange at the Council of the Federation Meeting in July 2004, where premiers from across Canada met with the leaders of the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis National Council, Inuit Tapirit Kanatami and, separately, the leader of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.
- ✓ Participated in a special meeting of First Ministers and Aboriginal leaders in September 2004 where agreement was reached on the need for an action plan to improve health services for all Aboriginal peoples; to develop a blueprint to improve the health status of Aboriginal peoples and health services; and to convene a FMM on Aboriginal Issues including the critical determinants of health.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

Children and Youth

Aboriginal youth is the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population. In Ontario, more than 50 per cent of the Aboriginal population (on- and off-reserve) is under the age of 27.

Aboriginal communities and organizations are working to develop ways to create more positive family and learning environments for their at-risk children and youth, many of whom face issues such as family breakdown and poverty. Aboriginal children are over-represented in Ontario's child welfare system where they account for approximately 17 per cent of the caseload, yet only account for about three per cent of all children in the province. The rate of youth suicide is two to five times the national average and even higher in isolated northern First Nations communities.

The McGuinty government wants a better future for all children in Ontario and is aware of the unique challenges that Aboriginal families and children face. We are introducing several new processes for us to work together on this matter. We are committed to working with Aboriginal communities and organizations to help give at-risk children and youth a better start in life. A critical gap exists in programming and services for Aboriginal children aged seven to 15, a crucial period in the development of healthy, positive attitudes and skills that set the stage for successful adulthood.

Goal

- Work with Aboriginal communities and organizations to provide meaningful support to Aboriginal children and youth on-and off-reserve and use resources effectively.

Strategies

- Ontario will support the creation of a new Urban Aboriginal Children and Youth program. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) will work with the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres to develop a culturally appropriate program related to the following priorities:
    - Give children the supports they need to make positive life choices;
    - Provide additional supports for children in care;
    - Promote healthy habits and physical development;
    - Provide alternatives to institutional interventions such as the child welfare and youth justice systems; and
    - Support children with disabilities who are at risk of additional challenges.
- Ontario will encourage the federal government to fund a similar program on-reserve to complement the new provincial initiative.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

What We've Done

- ✓ The Healthy Babies Healthy Children program includes annual funding of $7.62 million to support Aboriginal children and their families, delivered through the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS). Culturally appropriate family home visiting services are provided to Aboriginal families both on- and off-reserve.
- ✓ Through AHWS, funding is provided to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation to respond to the high incidence of youth suicide in remote First Nation communities and identify prevention strategies.
- ✓ In July 2004, the Native Child and Family Services of Toronto was designated a Children's Aid Society, enabling the agency to provide child protection services for Aboriginal children and youth in the city.
- ✓ In 2004-2005, MCYS increased its prevention services funding by $2.8 million to develop a new family violence and support service across 14 First Nation communities in northwestern Ontario.
- ✓ Through the Early Years Challenge Fund, more than 40 Aboriginal projects have received more than $5 million in provincial funding since 2001. The projects cover areas such as children's developmental opportunities; special populations; community resources; health; literacy and parenting supports. They will conclude at the end of 2005-2006.
- ✓ The Aboriginal Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Child Nutrition Program provides $4.4 million in funding for health promotion, prevention education and family support services to address Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and child nutrition.
- ✓ Several ministries participate in the Intergovernmental Committee on Aboriginal Youth Suicide to contribute to a co-ordinated response to the youth suicide crisis in northern First Nations communities.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

What We've Done *(continued)*

- ✓ MCYS also provides the following federally cost-shared programs:
  - $5.9 million to Aboriginal child and family service agencies for a range of prevention, community development and family support services in First Nation communities.
  - $10.9 million to several individual First Nations to provide prevention and community support services.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

Aboriginal Education

Ontario and its Aboriginal leaders recognize the importance of education in improving lifelong opportunities for Aboriginal children and youth. It is widely acknowledged among Aboriginal communities and educators that many Aboriginal students are achieving at a much lower rate than other students in the province.

Most First Nations in Ontario operate their own elementary schools and purchase services from school boards for students who continue their education by attending provincially funded secondary schools. A growing number of First Nations in the province also operate secondary schools on-reserve.

Aboriginal leaders and educators have voiced the need to develop curriculum, teacher training and supports that create a positive learning environment at both the primary and secondary school levels. Aboriginal communities also want to encourage more young people to seek postsecondary education and training.

The McGuinty government supports these goals. Our new approach will include working with Aboriginal peoples, school boards and the federal government to provide accessible, high-quality education, including postsecondary education and training, for Aboriginal children and youth.

Goal

- Work with Aboriginal leaders and organizations to improve educational outcomes among Aboriginal children and youth.

Strategies

- The Ministry of Education (MEDU) will work with Aboriginal communities and organizations and school boards to develop an Aboriginal Education Policy Framework to improve educational outcomes among Aboriginal children and youth. The Framework will develop ways to improve academic achievement, reduce the learning gap, and increase the retention and graduation rate of Aboriginal students in Ontario's publicly funded elementary and secondary schools.
- Foster good working relationships between First Nations and school boards.
- Work to establish clearer roles and responsibilities, acknowledging the federal government's special relationship with First Nations.
- Work with the federal government to improve the learning environment and educational outcomes of First Nation students living on-reserve in the province and ensure there is an integrated approach to adequate funding for the education of Aboriginal students.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

What We've Done

- ✓ The Ministry of Education (MEDU) provides annual funding ($650,000) to eight Native Friendship Centres to deliver alternative secondary school programs to address the drop out rates among urban Aboriginal students. The Alternative Secondary Schools Program originally had three sites in London, Fort Erie and Sudbury. It was expanded in September 2004 to include five more sites in Hamilton, Ottawa, Sault St. Marie, Kenora and Fort Frances.

- ✓ MEDU provided funding ($175,000) to the Northern Ontario Education Leaders (NOEL) to develop and implement projects to improve Aboriginal student achievement.

- ✓ MEDU also works to improve Aboriginal education through the Aboriginal-Specific Curriculum Program:

    - Curriculum policy documents have been developed for teaching Native Studies, grades 9 - 12, and Native Languages, grades 1 - 12. Support documents have been developed for teaching language patterns for six Aboriginal languages.

    - The ongoing Curriculum Review Project - Sustaining Quality Curriculum (SQC) Project - with input from Aboriginal organizations is revising through a five-year cycle, curriculum in Ontario elementary and secondary schools to include Aboriginal perspectives where relevant. Social Studies (Grades 1 - 6) and History and Geography (Grades 7 and 8) have been completed and implementation training is also complete, including teachers in First Nation schools. Revisions in Canadian and World Studies courses (Grades 9 - 12) have been completed, and Aboriginal perspectives have been incorporated in the revised Geography, History, Law, Politics, and Economics courses. Provincial implementation training on the revised courses has also been completed.

- ✓ MEDU provided funding in 2004-2005 to support 105 innovative school board projects to improve the graduation rate, reduce the drop out rate, and re-engage youth who have left school without a diploma. Seven of these projects, receiving a total of $2,392,850 in funding, include specific supports for Aboriginal learners and/or partnerships with Aboriginal communities.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

What We've Done *(continued)*

- ✓ Invested $25,000 in Blueprint for the Future, a series of career fairs for Aboriginal high school students, in partnership with the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation. Each year, about 1,500 students from across the host province learn about career opportunities in the areas of health, medicine, business, sciences, technology, finance and manufacturing.
- ✓ The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) provides more than $7 million annually for programs and services to support approximately 7,200 Aboriginal postsecondary students through special-purpose grants for colleges and universities:
  - The Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy ($6.07 million) works to increase Aboriginal participation and completion rates in universities and colleges, foster sensitivity to Aboriginal cultures and include Aboriginal partners in decisions affecting Aboriginal postsecondary education. Eligible colleges and universities have received funding for programs and services such as counsellors, support services projects, curriculum development and funding to offset the incremental costs of delivering Aboriginal postsecondary programming.
  - The Aviation Pilot - Fixed Wing Aboriginal Program ($1 million), is delivered through Canadore College at the First Nations Technical Institute.
  - Aboriginal teacher education programs ($198,000) are offered at Brock University, Lakehead University and Nipissing University.
  - The Native Nurses Entry Program ($70,000) at Lakehead University provides Aboriginal students with the requisite skills and academic preparation to enter the four-year nursing degree program.

Consultation Related to Constitutionally Protected Rights

Ontario has a duty to consult Aboriginal peoples where its actions may adversely affect an established or asserted Aboriginal or treaty right. The Supreme Court of Canada continues to clarify the nature of this duty.

Ontario is committed to meeting its duty to consult with and, where appropriate, to accommodate Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal leaders have asked Ontario to adopt a more consistent, effective approach to consultation on matters related to Aboriginal and treaty rights.

Goal

- Develop and implement effective consultation processes that are consistent with Ontario's consultation obligations related to Aboriginal and treaty rights.

Strategies

- Ontario will develop draft consultation guidelines to assist ministries in fulfilling their consultation obligations.
- Ontario will provide opportunities to Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal stakeholders to give their input on the draft guidelines.
- Ontario will work with the federal government and Aboriginal communities to facilitate co-ordination on consultation matters.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

New Northern Table

More than half of the First Nations in Ontario are located in the northern part of the province. Many are remote with fly-in access only. These communities face social and economic conditions that give rise to unique challenges in achieving prosperity and well-being.

First Nation peoples in the North have younger, faster-growing populations with lower education levels than the general population in Ontario. More than 45 per cent of northern First Nations' residents are under the age of 25. In the most northerly areas, more than 50 per cent are under the age of 16. This younger generation is more attuned to and ready to engage in economic opportunities as they arise.

First Nation peoples in the North also have higher rates of unemployment and, when they are employed, their median income is lower than that of the general population in the region. At the same time, there are untapped opportunities in the North with the potential to generate training, jobs, investment and other benefits for First Nations peoples.

Northern First Nations leaders have asked Ontario to develop a political forum dedicated to addressing these unique challenges and opportunities as part of our new approach. New solutions are required to ensure that First Nations peoples in the North prosper and improve their quality of life.

Goal

- The Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat (ONAS), working with the Ministries of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM) and Natural Resources (MNR), will establish a new political-level Northern Table to develop a constructive and co-operative approach to the unique challenges experienced by First Nations in achieving prosperity and well-being in the North.

Strategies

- ONAS, working with MNDM and MNR, will initiate discussions on the establishment of a Northern Table with First Nations and their representative political organizations. Once agreement is reached, initial partners at the table could include relevant Ontario government ministries, affected First Nations, their representative political organizations and Canada where appropriate.

- The participants' first task would be to negotiate a framework agreement on the appropriate representation at the table, the role of the table, priority matters and accountability measures.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

Métis Harvesting Regimes

Métis leaders have identified identity and rights-holder issues and the establishment of harvesting regimes that respect their constitutional rights as key issues for their communities.

Ontario will continue to seek greater clarity and understanding on the nature and scope of Métis harvesting rights protected by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Goal

- Negotiate and implement harvesting regimes that respect and accommodate Métis section 35 subsistence harvesting rights in a manner consistent with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Powley*.

Strategies

- Conduct research and analysis on Métis rights-bearing communities and individual rights holders in Ontario to facilitate the negotiation and implementation of interim harvesting regimes.
- Involve the federal government where appropriate.
- Negotiate and implement harvesting agreements with Métis communities.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVE

Aboriginal Justice Strategy

Aboriginal leaders have expressed concerns regarding the specialized justice needs of their communities, particularly in the areas of prevention, intervention, reintegration, and relapse prevention.

Ontario is committed to addressing these issues through the development of an Aboriginal Justice Strategy, together with Aboriginal partners. Our new approach will pursue effective ways to work together, reflecting the diverse needs of rural and urban Aboriginal communities, with an emphasis on prevention for children and youth and promoting community safety.

Goal

- The Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) will work with Aboriginal communities and organizations and relevant government ministries to design an integrated policy framework related to Aboriginal justice.

Strategies

- Engage Aboriginal communities in identifying justice priorities.
- Establish better linkages among existing provincial justice programs and the health, education and social service sectors.
- Promote more effective linkages between relevant Ontario ministries and other levels of government.
- Facilitate the more effective use of existing resources through strategic co-ordination, targeted delivery of existing services and a community development approach.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVE

What We've Done

- ✓ A series of working meetings is underway with Aboriginal partners to help develop justice services that respond to the diverse needs of Aboriginal communities across Ontario. The meetings are led by MAG.
- ✓ In summer 2004, Youth Justice Services held community consultations to explore ways to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal youth in care and find alternatives to custody.
- ✓ The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) works with First Nations wishing to administer their own police services. As of April 1, 2005, 92 First Nations communities were policed by eight self-directed services, with one more under development.
- ✓ For communities without self-directed police services, the OPP administers policing for 20 communities under the Ontario First Nations Policing Agreement and provides direct services to 22 other communities.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

Regular physical activity contributes to good health and well-being throughout life. Across Canada, children and youth – including Aboriginal young people living on- and off-reserve – are increasingly sedentary and overweight, raising their risk of serious health problems in adulthood. There are particular challenges for children and youth in remote Aboriginal communities to participate in sport, recreation and physical activity programs.

Goal

- Increase physical activity and sports participation levels among Aboriginal youth.

Strategies

- The Ministry of Tourism and Recreation (MTR) has launched ACTIVE2010 to help achieve the government's "Healthier Ontarians" target of increasing the proportion of Ontarians who are physically active to 55 per cent by the year 2010.
- A component of the ACTIVE2010 strategy will include initiatives designed to encourage Aboriginal children and youth to increase their physical activity levels and get more involved in sports.
- MTR has signed a bilateral agreement with the federal government to increase participation in sport. A component of the agreement is to support increased sports participation in Aboriginal communities. This initiative will include projects to enhance the Aboriginal sport delivery system, train Aboriginal coaches and leaders and encourage Aboriginal peoples to get more involved in sports.

What We've Done

- ✓ A series of grants to the Ontario Aboriginal Sports Circle and local and regional Aboriginal organizations have supported athlete development, coaching (including a women's coaching initiative), leadership development and the North American Indigenous Games.

NEW APPROACH INITIATIVES

Aboriginal Tobacco Strategy

Aboriginal communities have traditionally used tobacco for cultural and ceremonial purposes. However, widespread smoking of commercial tobacco products among Aboriginal peoples is a critical health issue. More than half of the Aboriginal population in Ontario smokes, compared to 20 per cent in the population as a whole.

Goal

- Reduce the overall rate of commercial tobacco use among Aboriginal peoples, and encourage Aboriginal youth to avoid smoking.

Strategy

- The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) will continue to work with Aboriginal partners to develop and implement culturally appropriate tobacco control programs and services.

What We've Done

- ✓ The Aboriginal Tobacco Strategy (delivered by Cancer Care Ontario) has received annual funding from MOHLTC to support Aboriginal peoples on their path to developing "tobacco-wise communities" that know the difference between traditional and commercial tobacco and have the knowledge, commitment, resources and skills to mobilize and deploy strategies to promote and protect the well-being of their members. This strategy includes capacity building, knowledge exchange, smoking prevention and cessation activities, public education, leadership engagement and evaluation.
- ✓ In 2004-2005 MOHLTC increased the support provided to the Aboriginal Tobacco Strategy by an additional $150,000, for a total of $400,000 annually.
- ✓ MOHLTC will be allocating additional funds for Aboriginal tobacco control activities beginning this year.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Land Claims

Ontario believes that negotiation combined with public consultation is the best way to address the historical, constitutional and practical issues that arise in Aboriginal land claims. Negotiated land claim settlements are preferable to litigation or other options because they lead to more enduring solutions that are acceptable to all parties in the process.

Successful land claim settlements will provide Aboriginal communities with opportunities for economic and community development, remove barriers to investment, and foster a positive business climate for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples alike.

Land claim settlements promote more prosperous Aboriginal communities that are better equipped to provide a healthier, brighter future for their children.

The federal government has primary responsibility for the resolution of Aboriginal land claims. When Ontario becomes involved, the issues usually concern the meaning of original treaty agreements, the extent to which these agreements have been honoured, and how to provide redress in cases where treaty commitments were breached.

In keeping with our new approach, Ontario will continue to promote a land claim process that:

- Addresses the interests and concerns of people who live on or who use the lands within the claim area through meaningful public involvement, and
- Promotes effective negotiations, meaningful settlements and good relations between affected Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

What We've Done

- ✓ Developed guidelines for making funds for land claim negotiations available to Aboriginal communities. The guidelines include accountability and performance measures toward achieving settlements, and set out terms of repayment for the funds provided from any final settlement.
- ✓ Streamlined internal approvals to help avoid undue delays in the land claim process.
- ✓ Some land claim negotiations include:
  - Current Land Claim Negotiations

    Algonquin
    Chapleau Cree
    Couchiching
    Fort William
    Michipicoten
    Missanabie Cree
    Pays Plat
    Pic Mobert
    Rocky Bay
    Temagami
    Thessalon
    Wabigoon
  - Recent Settlements and Agreements

    Big Grassy (implemented in 2004)
    Rainy River (2005)
    Wahta (2004)
  - Agreements Awaiting Ratification

    Lake Nipigon Ojibway
    Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Aboriginal Community Capital Grants Program

This program invests in the development of facilities that provide Aboriginal community services and encourage business activity. These facilities foster healthy lifestyles and skills development, especially among Aboriginal children and youth.

What We've Done

- ✓ Aboriginal Community Capital Grants Program projects approved since October 2003:

Bearskin Lake First Nation received grant approval for $450,810 in September 2004 for a community centre.

Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay) received grant approval for $33,000 in September 2004 for a small business centre feasibility study.

Fort Albany First Nation received grant approval of $33,750 in December 2003 for a small business centre feasibility study.

Kingfisher Lake First Nation received grant approval of $320,663 in September 2004 for a community centre.

Lac Seul First Nation received grant approval of $3,750 in December 2003 for a small business centre feasibility study.

Long Lake #58 First Nation received grant approval of $26,625 in July 2004 for a community centre feasibility study.

Missanabie Cree First Nation received grant approval of $207,900 in August 2004 for a small business centre.

Mohawk Council of Akwesasne received grant approval of $300,000 in August 2004 for a community centre.

North Spirit Lake First Nation received grant approval of $23,250 in September 2004 for a small business centre feasibility study.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) is a partnership between the Ontario government and 15 Aboriginal organizations and First Nations, serving Aboriginal peoples in Ontario residing on-reserve and in urban and rural areas.

It is a model of how much can be accomplished when we work together, when Aboriginal solutions are found to Aboriginal problems. With its focus on the issues facing Aboriginal families, the Strategy has a direct and beneficial impact on Aboriginal children and youth.

AHWS has created more than 250 community-based health and healing programs both on- and off-reserve, including a network of 10 Aboriginal health access centres, six healing lodges, nine women's shelters and family healing programs, crisis intervention teams focused on preventing youth suicide in 47 northern First Nations and delivery of the Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children program. While comparable to those provided to other Ontarians, AHWS programs and services have been designed to make them more effective for Aboriginal clients. The Strategy has also created more than 650 jobs in Aboriginal communities.

The McGuinty government recognizes that AHWS has improved access to primary health care and achieved concrete results in addressing family violence. We have renewed and increased its funding for a third five-year term.

People in Aboriginal communities have said they need culturally appropriate services to deal with their concerns. As part of our new approach, Ontario will continue to seek ways to help those who need our help, despite the serious fiscal challenges facing the province.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

What We've Done

- ✓ Ministers and Aboriginal leaders responsible for AHWS met in November 2004 to discuss future directions of the Strategy.
- ✓ In September 2004, the mandate of the Strategy to combine traditional Aboriginal and contemporary health and healing services was revised to include a four-pronged approach:
  - Improve Aboriginal health;
  - Support family healing;
  - Promote networking; and
  - Facilitate community development and integration.
- ✓ Allocated funding of $166.5 million over five years to renew the Strategy for a third five-year term.
- ✓ Provided an extra $25 million over five years to expand AHWS health and social services – representing an increase of 15 per cent. This funding will enhance programming for women and their children fleeing violence, improve health and youth treatment centres and fund new healing lodge services in the Toronto region.
- ✓ The new funding will also be used to hire more community wellness and crisis intervention workers who help Aboriginal communities deal with youth suicide and family violence.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Ipperwash Inquiry

Fulfilling a longstanding commitment, in 2003 the McGuinty government appointed Justice Sidney Linden to lead an independent, public inquiry into the events surrounding the death of Dudley George at Ipperwash in 1995.

The inquiry has a broad mandate to:

- Inquire into and report on events surrounding the death of Dudley George; and
- Make recommendations directed to the avoidance of violence in similar circumstances.

New Gaming Revenue Agreement

Ontario recognizes that First Nations in Ontario need to build a more stable source of funding for community, economic and cultural development, health and education.

In February 2005, the McGuinty government appointed former Premier David Peterson as the province's representative in discussions with First Nations toward achieving a new gaming revenue agreement.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Urban Aboriginal Issues

The majority of Aboriginal peoples in Canada now live in urban settings. Ontario collaborates with urban Aboriginal peoples and organizations to provide services through existing provincial programs, and pursues strategic partnerships with Canada related to this area.

What We've Done

- ✓ Ontario is participating in Phase I of the 2005 Urban Aboriginal Task Force study in partnership with the federal government, Trent University and three provincial Aboriginal organizations – the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association and the Ontario Native Women's Association.

  When completed in September 2006 this study will provide an in-depth profile of Ontario's urban Aboriginal population that will help governments meet the needs of this population through strategic planning and service provision.

- ✓ In partnership with Canada, municipal governments and Aboriginal organizations, Ontario participates in two federal Urban Aboriginal Study (UAS) demonstration projects in Thunder Bay and Toronto.

  The Thunder Bay project focuses on the alleviation of Aboriginal child poverty. The Toronto Urban Aboriginal Strategy Management Committee has approved six projects in the Greater Toronto Area for federal funding.

- ✓ Ontario has participated in a partnership with Canada, the City of Toronto and the Toronto Aboriginal Action Group to identify Aboriginal business needs, education and training issues in consultation with Aboriginal business people and service providers.

For more information on other initiatives, programs and services go to
www.nativeaffairs.jus.gov.on.ca and
www.gov.on.ca

BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS TOGETHER

Aboriginal peoples have always been, and continue to be, a diverse and vital presence in the culture and social fabric of Ontario. The McGuinty government honours that presence, and our new approach to Aboriginal affairs signals the start of real, positive change.

It means change in the way Ontario conducts its relationships with the different Aboriginal communities and organizations across the province. Change that reflects differing Aboriginal priorities and change that gives Aboriginal peoples more say in shaping decisions that affect their lives.

We need our Aboriginal partners to work with us to create a better future for Aboriginal children and youth, bringing their insight and experience to develop strategies that respond to the real needs of different communities.

We need our Aboriginal partners to join us in building strong, new relationships based on mutual co-operation and respect. The foundation has been laid through a network of flexible relationship processes that are key to our new approach.

It will take time for new, productive relationships to evolve – a process deserving of all our best efforts because it will lead to new, effective Ontario-Aboriginal partnerships. Partnerships that address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Aboriginal communities – large and small; remote, rural and urban – and that deliver Aboriginal solutions to Aboriginal issues.

The McGuinty government is committed to that process, every step of the way.

Together, we will work to promote the well-being and prosperity of Aboriginal communities across Ontario, now and for the future, while remaining fiscally responsible. Our new approach offers a basis to move forward in a spirit of mutual respect, co-operation and goodwill.

Together, we will work to build a better and more hopeful future.

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